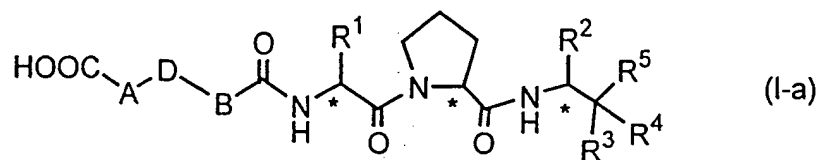


Amendments to the Claims

1. (Previously presented)

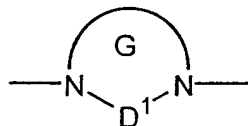
A heterocyclic compound of the formula (I-a):



wherein * means that the carbon atom marked with * is an asymmetric carbon atom,

A and B are the same or different and each is a lower alkylene group being optionally substituted by an oxo group,

D is a heteromonocyclic or heterobicyclic group of the following formula:



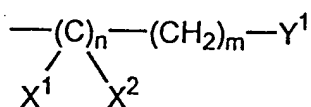
wherein D¹ is a methylene group or an ethylene group, and these groups may optionally be substituted by an oxo group, Ring G is a 5- to 14-membered, saturated or unsaturated, heteromonocyclic or heterobicyclic group optionally having other heteroatoms selected from a nitrogen atom, an oxygen atom and/or a sulfur atom, and said

heteromonocyclic or heterobicyclic group being optionally substituted by a substituent T¹ in which T¹ is the same or different 1 to 3 groups selected from

- (i) an oxo group,
 - (ii) a substituted or unsubstituted lower alkyl group,
 - (iii) a substituted or unsubstituted amino group,
 - (iv) a substituted or unsubstituted carbamoyl group,
 - (v) a carboxyl group or a lower alkoxy carbonyl group,
 - (vi) a phenyl group being optionally substituted by a halogen atom, a lower alkoxy group or a lower alkyl group, and
 - (vii) a substituted or unsubstituted lower alkyl carbonyl group,
- R¹ and R² are the same or different and each is a lower alkyl group,

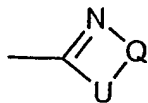
R³ and R⁴ are different from each other, and each is a hydrogen atom or a hydroxy group, or both combine together to form an oxo group,

R⁵ is a group of the formula:



wherein X¹ and X² are a halogen atom, Y¹ is a hydrogen atom, a halogen atom, a lower alkoxy carbonyl group, a lower alkyl aminocarbonyl group, an aralkyl aminocarbonyl group, an aralkyloxy carbonyl group, a lower alkyl carbonyl group, or an aralkyl carbonyl group, or a group of the

following formula:



wherein U is an oxygen atom or a sulfur atom, Q is a vinylene group or an orthophenylene group being optionally substituted by T^2 , T^2 is 1 to 3 groups selected from a halogen-substituted or unsubstituted lower alkyl group, a lower alkoxy group, a lower alkylsulfonyl group, a lower alkylcarbonyloxy group and an amino group being optionally substituted by a lower alkyl group,

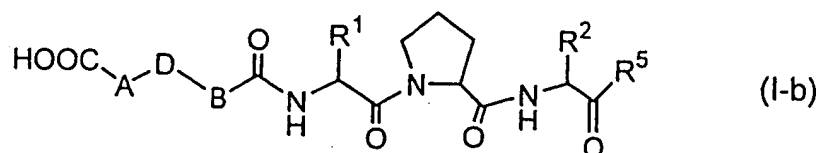
n is 0, 1 or 2, and

m is an integer of 0 to 5,

or its ester, or a salt thereof.

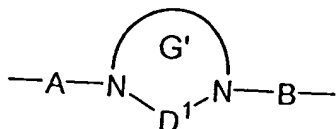
2. (Original)

The heterocyclic compound according to claim 1, which is a compound of the following formula (I-b):



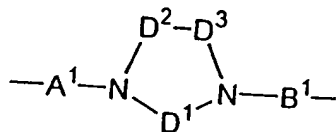
wherein A, B, D, R¹, R² and R⁵ are as defined in claim 1, or its ester, or a salt thereof.

3. (Previously presented) The heterocyclic compound according to claim 1, wherein the group of the formula: -A-D-B- is a group of the following formula:



wherein A, B and D¹ are as defined in claim 1, Ring G' is a 5- to 9-membered, saturated or unsaturated heteromonocyclic group having optionally 1 to 3 of other heteroatom selected from a nitrogen atom, an oxygen atom and/or a sulfur atom, and said heteromonocyclic group may have 1 to 3 substituents T¹ which are as defined in claim 1, or its ester, or a salt thereof.

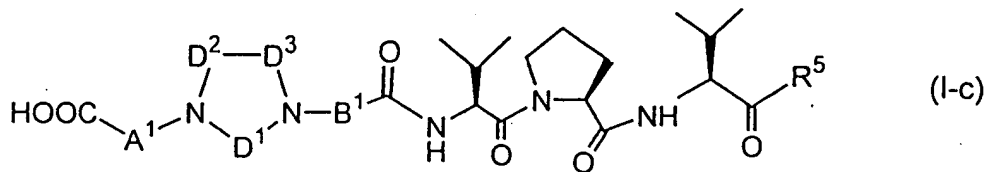
4. (Currently amended) The heterocyclic compound according to claim 1, wherein the group of the formula: -A-D-B- is a group of the following formula:



wherein A¹ is a methylene group or a group of the formula: -CH₂CO-, B¹ is a methylene group or a group of the formula: -COCH₂-, D² and D³ are the same or different and each is a vinylene group ~~being~~ optionally substituted by a lower alkyl group, or a methylene group ~~being~~ optionally substituted by an oxo group or a lower alkyl group, D¹ is as defined in claim 1, provided that both D² and D³ ~~should~~ are not simultaneously ~~be~~ a vinylene group ~~being~~ optionally substituted by a lower alkyl group, or its ester, or a salt thereof.

5. (Original)

The heterocyclic compound according to claim 4, which is a compound of the following formula (I-c):



wherein D¹ and R⁵ are as defined in claim 1, and A¹, B¹, D² and D³ are the same as defined in claim 4, or its ester, or a salt thereof.

6. (Original)

The heterocyclic compound according to claim 5, which is selected from the following compounds, its ester, or a salt thereof:

Compound 1: 2-(3-carboxymethyl-2-oxo-1-imidazolidinyl)acetyl-L-valyl-N-[(1S)-3,3,3-trifluoro-1-isopropyl-2-oxopropyl]-L-prolinamide;

Compound 2: 2-(3-carboxymethyl-2,4-dioxo-1-pyrimidinyl)-acetyl-L-valyl-N-[(1S)-2-(2-benzoxazolyl)-1-isopropyl-2-oxoethyl]-L-prolinamide;

Compound 3: 2-(4-carboxymethyl-2,3-dioxo-1-piperazinyl)acetyl-L-valyl-N-[(1S)-2-(2-benzoxazolyl)-1-isopropyl-2-oxoethyl]-L-prolinamide;

Compound 4: 2-(3-carboxymethyl-2,4-dioxo-1-pyrimidinyl)-acetyl-L-valyl-N-[(1S)-3-benzylamino-1-isopropyl-2,3-dioxopropyl]-L-prolinamide,

Compound 5: 2-(4-carboxymethyl-2,5-dioxo-1-piperazinyl)acetyl-L-valyl-N-[(1S)-2-(2-benzoxazolyl)-1-isopropyl-2-oxoethyl]-L-prolinamide;

Compound 6: 2-(3-carboxymethyl-2,5-dioxo-1-imidazolidinyl)-acetyl-L-valyl-N-[(1S)-3,3,3-trifluoro-1-isopropyl-2-oxopropyl]-L-prolinamide; and

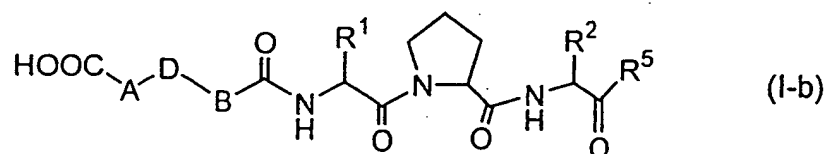
Compound 7: [[4-(2-carboxyacetyl)-1-piperazinyl]malonyl]-L-valyl-N-[(1S)-2-(2-benzoxazolyl)-1-isopropyl-2-oxoethyl]-L-prolinamide.

7. (Original)

A mixture comprising 90 % or more of 2-(3-carboxymethyl-2-oxo-1-imidazolidinyl)acetyl-L-valyl-N-[(1S)-3,3,3-trifluoro-1-isopropyl-2-oxopropyl]-L-prolinamide (Compound 1), or a salt thereof, and the remaining % consisting substantially of a stereoisomer of Compound 1 or a salt thereof.

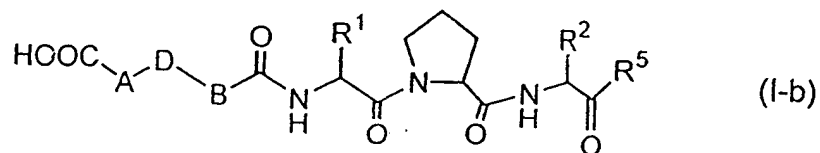
8. (Cancelled)

9. (Currently amended) A composition comprising a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier and human neutrophilic elastase inhibitor containing as the active ingredient a compound of the following formula (I-b):



wherein A, B, D, R¹, R² and R⁵ are as defined in claim 1, or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof in an amount effective to inhibit human neutrophilic elastase.

10. (Currently amended) A pharmaceutical composition comprising a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier and ~~containing as an active ingredient~~ a compound of the following formula (I-b):



wherein A, B, D, R¹, R² and R⁵ are as defined in claim 1, or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.